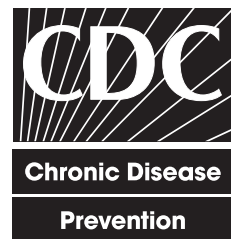


Preventing Chronic Diseases: Investing Wisely in Health



Preventing Obesity and Chronic Diseases Through Good Nutrition and Physical Activity

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Reality

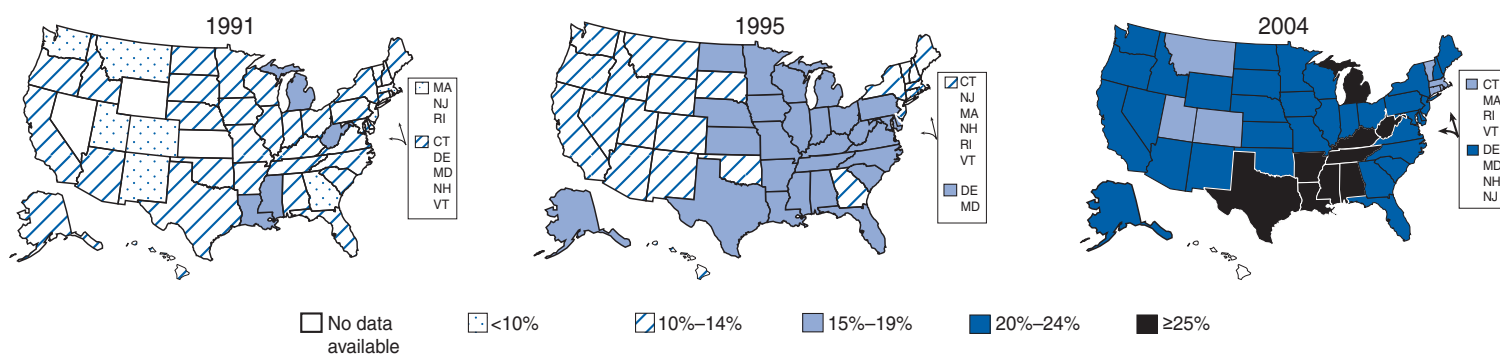
- During the past 20 years, obesity among adults has risen significantly in the United States. The latest data from the National Center for Health Statistics show that 30% of U.S. adults 20 years of age and older—over 60 million people—are obese.
- The percentage of young people who are overweight has more than tripled since 1980. Among children and adolescents aged 6–19 years, 16%—over 9 million young people—are considered overweight.
- Less than 25% of U.S. adults eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Less than 25% of young people eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Despite the proven benefits of physical activity, more than 50% of American adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits.

- More than a third of young people in grades 9–12 do not regularly engage in vigorous physical activity.
- Unhealthy diet and physical inactivity can cause or aggravate many chronic diseases and conditions, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

The Cost of Obesity and Chronic Diseases

- Among children and adolescents, annual hospital costs related to obesity were \$127 million during 1997–1999 (in 2001 constant U.S. dollars), up from \$35 million during 1979–1981.
- In 2000, the total cost of obesity in the United States was estimated to be \$117 billion. About \$61 billion was for direct medical costs, and \$56 billion was for indirect costs.
- In 1996, \$31 billion of treatment costs (in year 2000 dollars) for cardiovascular disease among adults was related to overweight and obesity.

Percentage of Adults Who Report Being Obese,* by State



* Body mass index ≥ 30 or about 30 pounds overweight for a 5'4" person. Based on self-reported weight and height.
Source: CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

State Program in Action:

Washington State's Access to Healthy Foods Coalition

Between 1990 and 2002, the obesity rate among Washington adults increased by 127%. Today, nearly three in five state residents are overweight or obese, and one in five high school students is overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. With CDC support, Washington is working to reverse this trend by encouraging better eating habits and physical activity.



Access to nutritious foods is an important—and frustrating—aspect of improving nutrition in this state. Washington is one of the most agriculturally abundant states, yet it has a high per capita hunger. In response, the Access to Healthy Foods Coalition was created in 2002. The coalition draws on the skills and resources of a diverse statewide membership, and its projects are creating healthier food choices in many environments, including schools, grocery stores, worksites, and areas underserved by supermarkets. For instance, coalition partner Rotary First Harvest helps growers and producers gather and deliver surplus produce to distribution centers, where it is packed and sent to food banks. Trucking companies let Rotary use empty trucks to haul the produce. Using funds from local foundations, Rotary buys produce bins, which are given to donors so they do not have to spend more time or money gathering surplus produce before it is picked up. This project creates a win-win situation: Farmers see surplus crops put to use, and food banks get nutritious foods they often cannot provide regularly to the people they serve. In addition, another coalition partner is creating an online database that will more quickly and efficiently connect growers, distributors, and others who want to help with those who need help most.

In the town of Moses Lake, environmental and policy changes are paving the way for good nutrition and physical activity. For example, a community garden project gives residents greater access to fresh produce and more opportunities to be physically active. Local school groups and chefs are helping to make the garden both a food source and an educational tool. In addition, the city plans to replace railroad tracks with biking and walking paths, and Grant County, which includes Moses Lake, plans to build trails along irrigation canals. New city and county zoning ordinances require wider sidewalks that are more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.

For more information and references supporting these facts, visit www.cdc.gov/nccdphp. For additional copies of this document, E-mail ccdinfo@cdc.gov.



The community garden in Moses Lake, Washington, is a place where residents can grow nutritious food, be active, and enjoy the outdoors.

How Physical Activity and Weight Loss Save Money

- In 2000, health care costs associated with physical inactivity topped \$76 billion.
- If 10% of adults began a regular walking program, \$5.6 billion in heart disease costs could be saved.
- A sustained 10% weight loss will reduce an overweight person's lifetime medical costs by \$2,200–\$5,300 by lowering costs associated with hypertension, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and high cholesterol.

Promising Approaches for Preventing Obesity

- Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of overweight in children.
- Regular physical activity is a key part of any weight control effort. Community strategies that increase physical activity levels include community-wide campaigns, “point-of-decision” prompts (such as signs placed by elevators and escalators that encourage people to use nearby stairs), and physical education in schools. Enhancing access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach is also successful as are nonfamily social support and individually adapted health behavior changes.
- Reducing the time children spend watching television appears to be effective for controlling their weight.
- For people who are overweight, increasing physical activity helps them reduce many of the risks for illnesses associated with obesity, helps them maintain their weight loss, and helps them prevent weight gain.

Hope for the Future

We can reduce obesity and other chronic diseases in this country by improving eating habits and increasing physical activity. Increasing opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity are just some of the steps we can take to promote the health of our nation.